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TAJIKISTAN

CASE STUDY

Land Returns Higher Yields

Due to improved irrigation farmers increase profits from their land by \$1 million



As a result of improved access to water, crops such as these grapes were plentiful in this year's harvest.
Photo: USAID

The USAID-funded Water User Association Support Project helps farmers to improve management of water systems and increase production as well as the profitability from their fields.

Challenge

Unreliable and poorly managed irrigation and community water systems are widespread in Tajikistan. Limited resources for infrastructure maintenance, lack of technical and management skills, and farmer debt all contribute to the declining condition of the country's irrigation and drainage systems.

Initiative

The USAID-funded Water User Association Support Project directly works with those who are most affected most by degraded water systems, providing training in irrigation renovation, operation, and management. The project helped establish 15 water user associations and teaches their members how to make investment decisions needed to maintain and improve on-farm systems and resolve conflicts and long standing water management and delivery problems. The project also helps farmers to identify markets for their produce, improve processing technology, and increase knowledge of plant species and farming methods.

Results

According to a 2006 profitability assessment, farmers participating in the USAID-funded project increased their profitability by an estimated \$1 million on 6,310 hectares of farm land under irrigation. Profitability increases were achieved in wheat, orchard crops, vegetables, and cotton. Wheat and orchard harvests nearly tripled, vegetable and strawberry yields doubled, while cotton production increased from 1.8 to 2.8 tons per hectare. Although the latter crop led in profitability, high value fruit and vegetable production offers the greatest potential for economic growth. Gauyr Abdulloev, a member of the Mehtari water user association, said, "We had a good harvest this year. In 2005, I had a profit from persimmons of about \$3,000, this year it was about \$5,500. This kind of increase was attained by nearly all families."

With the success of last year's harvest, farmers are beginning to see how participation in a water user association can lead to better managed water systems and improved livelihoods. Looking ahead, farmers want to continue to increase their investment in irrigation water management.